

A child-friendly version of:

**2022 report to the  
UN General Assembly**

by the Special Representative of the  
Secretary-General on Violence Against Children



'Dear children, dear partners,  
This year my report to the General  
Assembly is about how the climate  
crisis harms children. You have  
united and taken the lead calling  
for urgent climate action. With this  
report I add my voice to yours.  
A safe and healthier world is  
possible, and urgently needed.'

**Najat Maalla M'jid**



OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF  
THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON

**VIOLENCE  
AGAINST  
CHILDREN**



# United Nations

The 'United Nations' or the UN, is an organization of almost all the countries in the world, created to promote development, peace and security and human rights. Even though the UN has changed over the years, it remains a place where countries discuss common problems, and find solutions TOGETHER, for all humanity, including YOU.

## Meet Najat Maalla M'jid:

The UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children



The head of the UN is the 'Secretary-General' Antonio Guterres. He selects people to work with him on specific issues. One of them is the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children (or SRSR-VAC), Najat Maalla M'jid.

Her role is to help countries **end all forms of violence against children, in all settings, everywhere, always putting children first.**

Every year Najat reports to Member States on her work. ('Member States' is what the UN calls countries who are members of the UN.)

**But she also reports to children like YOU, who are taking action to stop violence everywhere.**



## How are Najat and her team working with everyone to end violence against children?

They bring people together to end violence, helping to create more action to address the concerns we all have about:

Why violence against children happens



Its consequences



How to prevent violence.



Which are the best solutions.



Because governments are the ones to develop and implement most actions that will help end violence against children, Najat works closely with them. She supports and visits them to work hand in hand with the Government, the different national institutions, the United Nations, and children themselves.

She also works closely with civil society, like non-profit organizations or volunteer groups, helping them to connect to each other and to other partners, and supporting them in their work to end violence.



Most importantly,  
Najat engages  
with children.



Involving and  
empowering children as  
key agents of change.



Amplifying their  
voices and actions.

Connecting children  
with decision makers,  
civil society organiza-  
tions, and other key  
stakeholders



## THIS IS WHY IN THE PAST YEAR:



She reached thousands of children, and inter-acted with them around many issues related to children's rights and the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.



The world has 17 goals called the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to meet by the year 2030. All 17 goals affect children's lives in one way or another. This includes ending all forms of violence against children, and addressing the climate crisis.



They also developed a child-friendly version of her report to the Human Rights Council and held a rich and fantastic dialogue with over 450 children. Children asked almost 200 questions, which were all answered through short videos.



Her team developed a digital participation map to amplify children's actions and help them connect with each other. To keep this map up to date, her team launched 'Let's tell the world', a social media campaign that wants to show the world how children are making it better, safer, greener, and more inclusive.

"The time for meaningful climate action is now. We have talked and discussed, we know what needs to be done and the solutions are there. It is now time to act, we need your help and likewise, you need our help. We must do this together."  
Girl, 15, Trinidad and Tobago



Have you shared your initiative with us?  
Visit [childparticipation.un.org](https://childparticipation.un.org)!

# HOW DOES THE CLIMATE CRISIS HARM CHILDREN?

The climate crisis is one of the major global threats of our times, and children like you have been alerting the world for years.

**We hear you, and we are joining our voices to yours: we need to act **NOW**, fast and efficiently to save our planet.**

The world is facing a climate crisis. Although the climate is always changing, this time it's different: Human activity is causing changes in the atmosphere, the land and the ocean, and triggering:

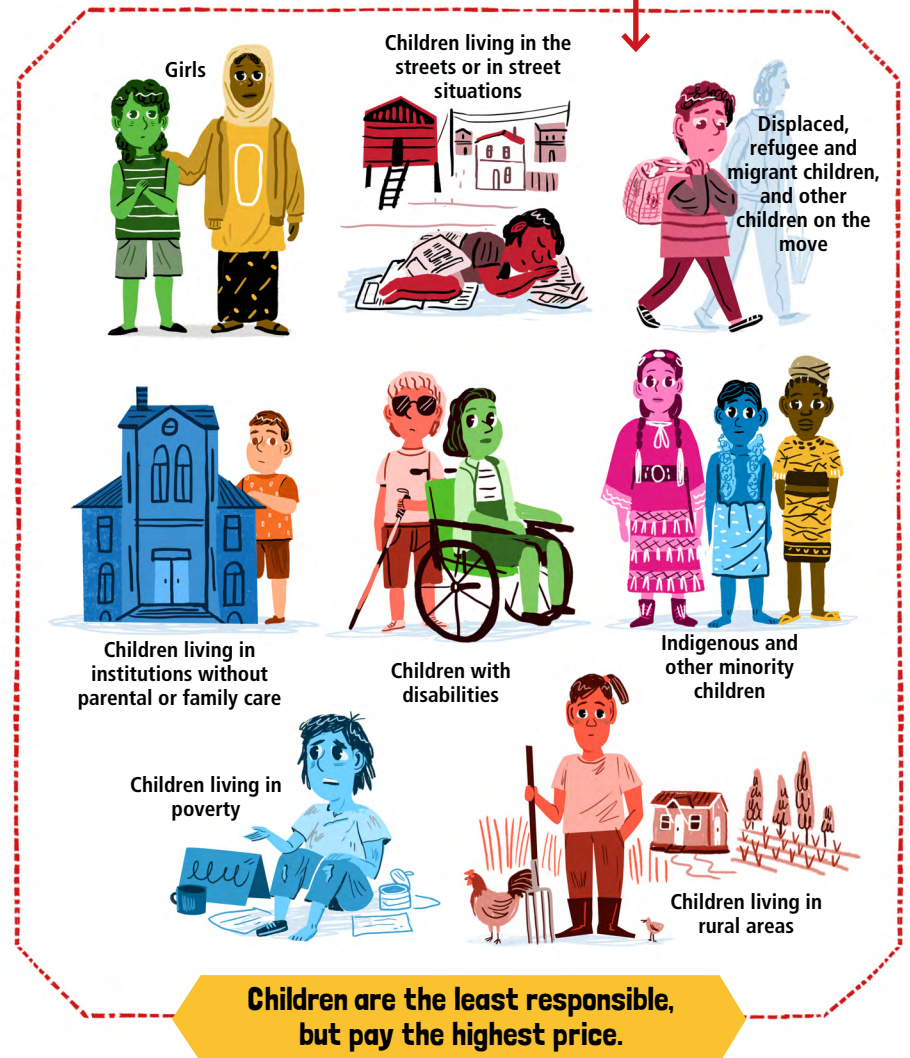


Children like you were the first ones to warn the world, that:

**ALL CHILDREN ARE AFFECTED**

**CHILDREN ARE MORE VULNERABLE TO THE CLIMATE CRISIS THAN ADULTS,**

especially the most disadvantaged, and those living in high-risk and fragile contexts including in coastal and rural areas:

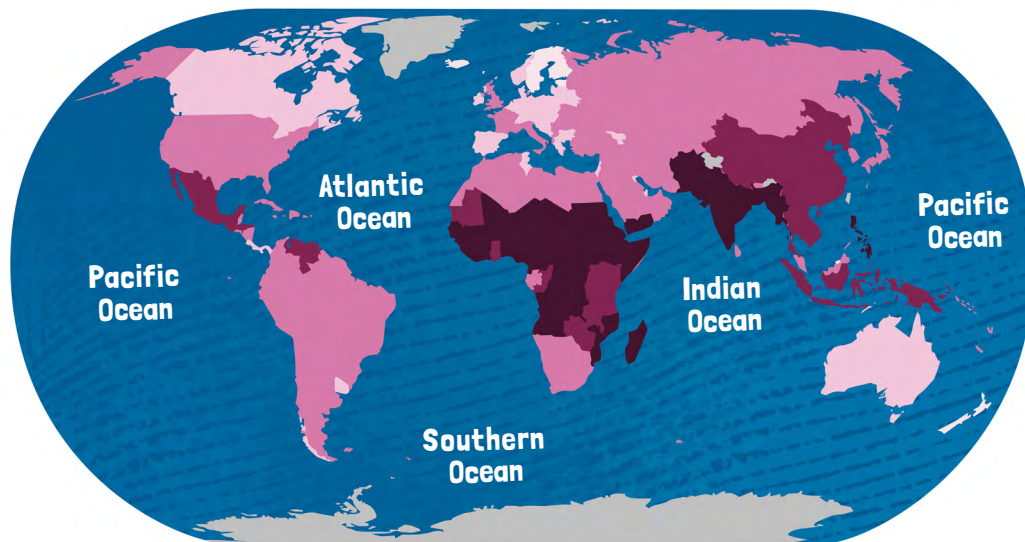
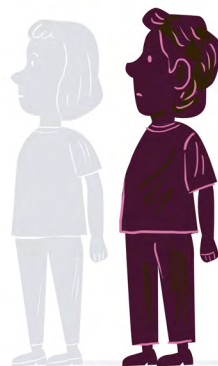


**Children are the least responsible, but pay the highest price.**

## Have you experienced the effects of climate change in your city, town, or village?

Some children think that it doesn't affect them, but a study done by **UNICEF**<sup>1</sup> told us that the majority of children experience weather and other consequences caused by climate change and environmental degradation.

In fact, **1 billion children** - that is almost half of the children in the world - are at very high risk of the impacts of the climate crisis, as you can see in this map.



### How at risk children are of the impacts of the climate crisis:

- Very high risk**
- High risk**
- Medium to high risk**
- Low to medium risk**
- Low risk**
- There is no data regarding how at risk children are.**

(This map has been based on a more detailed one from UNICEF'S publication 'The climate crisis is a child rights crisis')

<sup>1</sup>The Climate Crisis is a Child Rights Crisis | UNICEF

## AND HOW DOES THE CLIMATE CRISIS HARM CHILDREN? WHAT IS THE CONNECTION TO VIOLENCE?

As children have been telling the world, the climate crisis is not only about the environment, but it also **AFFECTS PEOPLE**. Especially them.

### How?



When the climate crisis is also combined with other existing factors (like poverty, food insecurity, conflicts and wars, social inequalities and humanitarian crises), **it can increase or worsen violence against children.**

"Please take more measures to save children who are at risk. I wish you would listen to our opinions more."

Boy, 11, Japan



## LET'S SEE HOW:

Different natural (and not natural) disasters are the result of climate change.

For example:



These disasters affect families and communities in different ways, which can lead to children being at risk of experiencing violence. For example:

Families may decide to pull their children out of school because they can't afford it. And when children's education is interrupted, they are more likely to be victims of violence, including being sent to work to support the family, or even have girls get married.



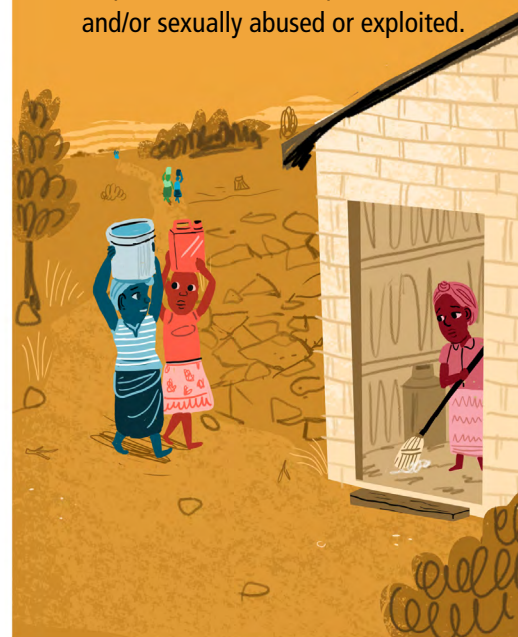
Families may decide to move from the place where they live because their living conditions have been affected by the disaster. Moving to live somewhere else is called displacement. And displaced children are more likely to be separated from their families and become victims of various forms of violence at all stages of their journey.



In 2020, disasters - including storms and flooding - triggered three times more internal displacement than violent conflicts.



When climate and environmental disasters happen, women and girls are among the most affected, and are more exposed to violence. Because of their traditional roles, they may have to fetch water from farther away, forced to work for others doing house chores, or even be married, or be trafficked and/or sexually abused or exploited.



Not having enough access to water or food, can cause conflict and violence.



The climate crisis also affects children's mental health, as they can feel constantly worried, anxious and nervous about the future because of the climate crisis.

**Have you ever felt like this?**

**We recommend you talk to a trusted adult or a friend if you do so.**


# CHILDREN ARE AT THE FOREFRONT OF CLIMATE ACTION WORLDWIDE.

They are ALREADY acting through social media activity, community and civic engagement, participation in climate negotiations, child-led strikes and peaceful protests, and social mobilization movements, despite the barriers they face.




"When I'm taking action, I don't feel like I am helpless and that things are hopeless, because then I feel like I'm doing everything I can(...). And that gives me very much hope, especially to see all the other people all around the world, the activists, who are taking action and who are fighting for their present and for their future."


Greta Thunberg, Sweden, 18 (2021)




Children are standing out as environmental and human rights defenders and the adult world should continue to empower them and follow their lead. They are increasingly using the justice system as a powerful tool to address climate (what we call climate justice). Adolescents and youth led a lawsuit against the United States on how their rights have been affected because of the climate crisis, mobilizing over 32,000 young people.




In the United Arab Emirates, two teenage siblings started a PEPC campaign (Papers, E-wastes, Plastics and Cans) and are mobilizing their school, peers, and parents, collecting approximately 15,000kgs of waste every month.




In Uganda, children and young people repurpose used water bottles as containers for homemade liquid soap which they sell to help support their families. Through this youth-led initiative, children have been empowered to take matters into their own hands to help address climate action, so when there were too many bottles for the small liquid soap business, they came up with the idea of selling the used water bottles to recycling companies.




Recognizing that indigenous people are disproportionately on the front lines of the climate crisis, in Australia, teenage students united to create one of the biggest movements in the history of the country - Schoolstrike4climate - to demand decision makers to treat climate change as a crisis.



In 2012 in Peru, seven-years old José created the first bank for children 'Eco Banco del Estudiante', which turns trash children find on the streets into money. The bank now has more than 6,000 members aged 10 to 18.



In Colombia, a group of 25 children and youth came together to create the first lawsuit in Latin America on climate change and future generations. And they won! The Court ordered the protection of the Colombian Amazon.



Having identified rising sea levels as a problem, in Fiji, children and youth have developed a climate-smart solution to coastal erosion, planting and maintaining mangrove trees to allow the coast to recover.



# MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE!

LET'S JOIN THE VOICES OF MILLIONS OF CHILDREN.

Together, we CAN achieve a safe and healthy environment for and with children.

how?

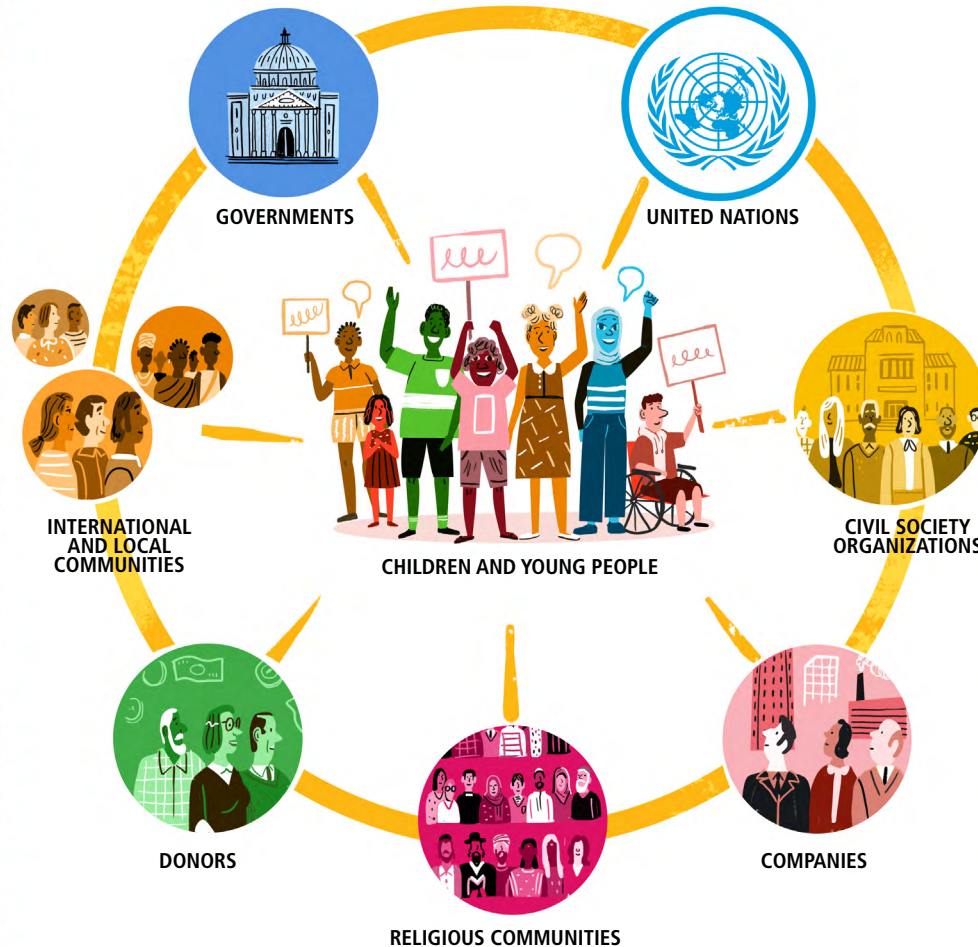


"Personally, the climate crisis makes me feel unsafe, and as if none of my goals will ever be fulfilled. A few months ago I went through a tough time because of this, but now I am learning how to overcome it and face it. Being in touch with other girls who understand me has been critical for this".

Isidora, 14, Chile

By addressing the problem **TOGETHER LIKE AN ORCHESTRA, AND NOT LIKE SOLO PLAYERS**

States need to work with all players, investing in services where different sectors collaborate together, like an orchestra and not like solo players playing different instruments at the same time:



## By placing children at the center of responses

Many political commitments are addressing the climate crisis. But they often don't take into account children, who **must not be forgotten**.



## By investing enough resources in child sensitive policies, legislation, programs and actions.

Policies and legislations need to be child sensitive. The lack of investment in children cannot be justified.



### By engaging companies in the response and making them accountable

Companies (including those exploiting oil, gas and mines, those involved in deforestation, and in large amounts of meat production) have a very important responsibility and role to play in addressing the climate crisis, especially because businesses have been the source of environmental damage that impacts the climate and children’s wellbeing. They must be part of the solution by changing their production methods and mitigating their impact on the climate to protect children.



### By encouraging cooperation between countries

The climate crisis affects countries in different ways. It’s common that the ones who are at greater risk are those who are the least responsible for the climate crisis. Countries need to work with one another.



### By involving children as key actors of change

Children have been in the driver seat for years! They need to be involved in designing, implementing these policies and programs. We need to make the connection between decision makers and children even stronger and:

- Strengthen children’s capacities on climate adaptation and mitigation.**
- Invest in education on climate change and the environment.**
- Equip children to be part of the solution.**

“We, the children demand for urgent action and solutions to climate change. We are the most affected yet least responsible for climate change. We also need to be included or consulted when coming up with the solutions. When we are included, we learn more and in our own small way are able to take action and engage in activities that address climate change like proper disposal of garbage and planting trees.”

Michelle, 13, Kenya

# KEY MESSAGES

We have no time to lose to achieve a safe, inclusive and healthy world. That is why I would like to leave you with the following key messages, which I have also shared with decision makers in my report.



Too many children are already being left behind, and the climate crisis is aggravating this. No country is immune and no child is immune. **It is urgent to act, and to place children at the center of the response.**



**Concrete actions on the climate crisis are essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals**, because the climate crisis and sustainable development are linked: the world needs to do more about the climate crisis to move forward.



Solutions need to come from a new angle: with collaboration between all sectors, and placing children and women at the center.



More investment in children is needed to build safe, just, inclusive and resilient societies, for and with children. **Children and young people MUST be involved in all stages of identifying and implementing the solutions.**

"Our climate and environment play a very important role in our lives. I want people to understand that the change of climate does not only affect our lives, but our future generations' too. If you stand up together, and put in the effort to make a change, then the environment will thank you. It promises you the freshest air and the purest water, the tallest mountains and the freshest trees, then we must also show our responsibility and promise the restoration of the environment. If we put the effort into it, we can do it. Anything is possible."

Girl, 13, India



## Do you want to learn more

Here are some  
resources we  
recommend you  
check out!

- [The Climate Crisis is a Child Rights Crisis | UNICEF](#)
- [Environment and climate change | UNICEF](#)
- [UNICEF-Global-Insight-Guiding-Principles-for-children-on-the-move-in-the-context-of-climate-change-2022.pdf](#)
- [My Planet, My Rights : A guide for children to tell the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child about their Right to a Healthy and Safe Environment | Child Rights Coalition Asia \(crcasia.org\)](#)
- [Youth for climate action | UNICEF](#)
- [Youth Programmes & Initiatives \(unep.org\)](#)
- [A COP Fit for children: How to support children's participation \(Save the Children\)](#)
- [We World Index 2021 Women and Children in a Changing World.pdf](#)



OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF  
THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON

# VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

Children's quotes in this report were taken from the online questionnaire for the General Comment No.26 Summary Report by Children and Young People (August 2022) and direct contributions from children affiliated with partner organizations.



Let's  
continue the  
conversation



[violenceagainstchildren.un.org](https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org)



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